

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 19537 251508Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 19537

NODIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, EG, UK, US
SUBJ: MIG MAINTENANCE

REF (A) STATE 279134, (B) STATE 281259,

1. REF REF A, DATT HAS CHECKED WITH BRITISH COUNTERPART WHO CONFIRMED THAT BRITISH AEROSPACE MAGAZINE STORY ESSENTIALLY UNTRUE, HOWEVER, A TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY STUDY WAS INDEED CONDUCTED ON FERANTI INERTIAL NAVIGATION PLATFORM. FLIGHT TESTS WERE SUCCESSFUL, BUT THERE AFTER EQUIPMENT WAS REMOVED FROM TEST AIRCRAFT. EGYPTIANS, ACCORDING UK AIR ATTACHE, DISCOURAGED BY HIGH COST OF SYSTEM AND HAVE INDICATED NO INTEREST IN ACQUIRING IT SINCE JAN 77.

2. IF GOE HAD THE MONEY, WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT HAWKER-SIDLEY MIGHT BE PREPARED SIGN CONTRACT BUILD MAJOR FACILITY IN EGYPT FOR AIRFRAME REPAIRS. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CENSURE GOE FOR WANTING SUCH FACILITY. ALL INDICATIONS TO DATE SUGGEST THAT GOE DOES NOT HAVE FUNDS FOR ANY SUCH PROJECT AND HAS HIGHER PRIORITY USES FOR SUCH SAUDI AND GULF STATE FUNDS AS MAY BECOME AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY PURPOSES.

3. ITALIAN COMPANIES, WHO WE GATHER HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE, HAVE NOT BEEN IN TO SEE US. HENCE,
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OUR INFO IS A BEST THIRD HAND, SUCH AS THAT REPPORTED REF B. WHILE I THINK WE LOOK A BIT FOOLISH ASKING GOE FOR RECONFIRMATION OF ITS AVOWED DESIRE TO CONTINE ALONG PREVIOUSLY AGREED LINES SOLELY BECAUSE OF SPECULATIVE AEROSPACE ARTICLE, I HAVE AUTHORIZED DATT MAKE SUCH A LOW KEY INQUIRY TO APPROPRIATE EAF OFFICERS AND WILL REPORT RESULTS ASAP. I HARDLY THINK A HIGHER LEVEL APPROACH AT THIS TIME WARRANTED. IF EGYPTIAN/ITALIAN TALKS

HAVE BROKEN DOWN, OR HAVE BEEN INDEFINITELY DELAYED BECAUSE OF EGYPTIAN STALLING, THEN WE WOULD HAVE PROPER PEG ON WHICH TO HAND A NEW APPROACH TO MINWAR. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW DIRECTLY FROM ITALIAN COMPANIES RATHER THAN THROUGH GE AND LOCKHEED HOW THINGS ARE GOING. WE CAN THEN MAKE BETTER JUDGMENT ABOUT WHAT, IF ANY, FURTHER DEMARCHE SHOULD BE MADE TO EGYPTIANS ON THE SUBJECT.

4. REF A TROUBLES ME ON ONE OTHER ACCOUNT. IT RATHER SUGGESTS THIS EXERCISE IS PRIMARILY A TRADE PROMOTION EFFORT IN BEHALF OF LOCKHEED. OUR UNDERSTANDING HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO ASSIST GOE IN MIG MAINTENANCE PROBLEM TO THE EXTENT THAT EGYPTIANS WANT SUCH ASSISTANCE. IF FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN THEY DO NOT WANT IT, GIVEN CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SENSITIVITY TO SUCH MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM, WE WOULD QUIETLY DROP THE MATTER RATHER

THAN ACTIVELY BEATING DRUMS FOR GE AND LOCKHEED PARTICIPATION IN MIG MAINTENANCE. SEEMS TO ME THAT WE HAVE FULFILLED OUR COMMITMENT TO SADAT TO FACILITATE MIG ENGINE AND AIRFRAME MAINTENANCE, NOT DIRECTLY AS HE HAD HOPED, BUT THROUGH ITALIAN COMPANIES WITH AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS. BALL IS NOW IN EGYPTIAN COURT AND IF EAR DECIDES IT WANTS TO HANDLE THE MATTER DIFFERENTLY, OR ATTACHES A LOWER PRIORITY TO THE EFFORT THAN INITIALLY SUGGESTED TO US, WE SHOULD BE GUIDED BY ITS WISHES. IN SAYING THIS, HOWEVER, WISH REAFFIRM WE HAVE NO PRESENT EVIDENCE THAT EAF HAS DROPPED ITS INTEREST ON CONTACTING WITH ITALIAN FIRMS TO DO
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THE JOB IF SATISFACTORY FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE WORKED OUT. SAME TIME IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY GREAT SENSE OF URGENCY ON PART GOE ABOUT MATTER.

5. RE REF B, DATT WILL URGE EAF PROVIDE ALFA ROMEO WITH NECESSARY LIST.
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